



T H E  
L I F E  
O F  
*BENJAMIN BARKER,*  
A NOTORIOUS  
HIGHWAYMAN, &c.





[*This Day is Publish'd, Price Four-pence,*]

**T**HE Life of *Thomas Munn*, alias the Gentleman Brick-maker, alias *Tom the Smuggler*, who was executed with *John Hall*, alias *Rich*, on Friday the 6th of April, 1750, at *Chelmsford*, and hung in Chains near *Rumford* Gallows, for robbing the *Yarmouth* Mail on the 20th of July last. Publish'd from the Copy all wrote with his own Hand, and delivered by him the Morning of his Execution to Mr. *Thomas Venden*, Turnkey of his Majesty's Gaol at *Chelmsford* in *Essex*, with a particular Desire it might be printed. To which is added, a short Account of the Life of *John Hall*, his Accomplice, and the Manner of their being taken : Likewise their Behaviour at the Place of Execution.

*London*: Printed for *Thomas Harris* at *Aldersgate*, *C. Corbet* in *Fleetstreet*, and sold by most Booksellers in Town and Country, and by the Hawkers who carry the News.

THE  
L I F E  
O F  
*BENJAMIN BARKER,* K

A NOTORIOUS  
H I G H W A Y M A N,  
FROM HIS  
Y O U T H to his D E A T H;

W H O W A S

Executed at *Chelmsford* on *Friday* the 18th of *May*,  
1750, for robbing Mr. JOHN BLOWER, of  
*Bocking*, in the *Bury* Coach.

C O N T A I N I N G

A Full Account of his wicked Behaviour from his In-  
fancy, with the many Intrigues during his Apprentice-  
ship with lewd Women, &c.

T O G E T H E R W I T H

The many Robberies he and his Gang committed in divers  
Parts of *England*.

A L S O

An Account of his Trial, Behaviour in Gaol after Sentence,  
and dying Words at the Place of Execution.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. UNDERWOOD, in *Fleet-street*, and sold  
at *Aldersgate*, the *Royal-Exchange*, and by most Book-  
sellers in Town and Country; likewise by the Hawkers  
who carry the News. 1750. (Price Three-pence.)



W. Musgrave!







THE  
L I F E

OF  
**BENJAMIN BARKER,**

A notorious Highwayman.

**T**HIS Benjamin Barker was a Native of *Saffron-Walden* in *Essex*. He was born in the remarkable mad Year 1720; but as to the Day or Month of his Nativity he could not exactly determine. Tho' his Parents were in but indifferent Circumstances, yet they were honest as well as industrious; and as he was his Mother's Darling, there was no Money spared in Reason, that might contribute towards his future Happiness, by bestowing on him an Education, even beyond their Income. They put him therefore, whilst young, to a very considerable School, in the County of *Essex* abovementioned, where, being a Youth of sprightly Parts, he excelled most of his School-Fellows, of his tender Age, in those little Ac-

B                      accomplishments

complishments which were recommended to his Practice by his indulgent Parents; inso-much that before he was eight Years of Age, he could read without the least Hesitation, write a legible Hand, and give a very satisfactory Account of the first four Rules in Arithmetic, to the great Joy of his Father and Mother, as well as to the Credit and Reputation of his Master.

Before he attained however the ninth Year of his Age, he began to be very untoward, disobedient to his Mother, and ungrateful both to her and his Master, who, as the one spared no Cost, so the other spared no Pains, in giving him the necessary Instructions for his early Improvement in the several Branches of Literature, which he found his tender Years capable of.

He would frequently, before he was ten Years old, purloin his Play-Fellow's Books, and clandestinely make them away, in Order to furnish his Pocket with petty Expences; and so from one little Act of Unluckiness to another, would proceed to Facts of a more criminal Nature; notwithstanding he had always Cunning and Artifice enough to get clear, when he was suspected, by fixing the Blame on some innocent Companion, who had not equal Assurance with himself.

In short, he played so many unlucky Pranks between the Age of ten and fourteen, in many of which he was openly convicted, and for which

which he was as openly punished and exposed to Shame in the public School.

But his Master, finding that none of his friendly Admonitions, nor the severest of his Chastisements had the desired Effect upon him, or worked the least Reformation, he sent him home to his Parents with all the Testimonies of Contempt, and desired them to undertake the Task he was obliged to decline; and that for his Part, he would not admit of so bad an Example, to be shewn in his School, on any Account, notwithstanding he had no Objection to the Encouragement they gave him for the Improvement of their Son, which he always readily acknowledged was rather greater than less than their mean Circumstances could well admit of.

His Parents, being very honest and very indulgent, as we hinted before, received this unwelcome Message from his Master with Tears in their Eyes, but with Thanks however, for his Endeavours to reclaim this their naughty Son.

From the Time he left his School to the Time he was full fourteen Years of Age, they undertook the Drudgery of tutoring him themselves; but finding that neither fair Promises, severe Menaces, nor actual corporal Punishment, would deter him from the Commission of such evil Actions as they were perfectly ashamed of, they resolved to raise a small Sum of Money, in order to induce the first honest



Tradesman that they could find to take him Apprentice.

Accordingly by that Time he had attained the fourteenth Year of his Age, they prevailed on a very industrious honest Blacksmith, in a Town far distant from the Place wherein they themselves resided, and one who knew nothing of his innate bad Qualities, to take him under his Tuition ; and before he had Time to find out any of his enormous Pranks, through the Temptation of a few Guineas, bound him directly to his Service, by Indentures of Apprenticeship regularly signed and sealed, for the Term of seven Years.

Our young artful Apprentice, in some measure, approved of his new Settlement, and perceiving his Master a good-natur'd Man, and his Mistress kinder to him than he could reasonably expect, he behaved for near the three first Years of his Servitude so well, that his Parents were over-joyed at his happy Situation, and the just Grounds they had, to hope he would prove a very faithful Servant to his Master, and a great Comfort to themselves, in their old Age.

The Scene, however, too soon changed ; and by that Time he had attained the seventeenth Year of his Age, the old Sparks of his former Fire began to revive ; and the older he grew, the more vicious and wicked was his Deportment.

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The first Transgression, of which he was convicted, was an Elopement from the Meeting on the Lord's Day ; and as his Mistress was a Speaker amongst the Quakers, and very remarkable for the Sanctity of her Manners, took him very severely to Task, before his Master, after their Return from the Conventicle. She told him in very warm Terms, that he was a naughty Youth ; that she feared the Light was not in him ; and that in Case he was once addicted to contemn the Service of the Lord on his Holy Day, both she and her house should soon become Sufferers through his profane Practices.

Tho' the good Man joined with his Dame in her pious Exhortations, yet he thought her Reproofs too warm for a first Elopement ; and therefore he told him, that upon a suitable Humiliation he should find Forgiveness for this first Offence.

This Storm, thus happily blown over, our young Apprentice proved doubly diligent for a whole month after, and gave them all the outward Tokens of sincere Contrition for his first Act of Disobedience.

He was now more in Favour than ever, both with his Master and Mistress ; it was not long however, before he cast a luscious Eye on *Abigail* their Maid, and being hale and handsome, he soon got into her good Graces.

This Amour, 'tis true, had a good Effect  
for

for some considerable Time ; he absented himself from all Company, and it was with great Difficulty that he could be prevailed with to stay an Hour from Home.

This Conduct of his still enhanc'd his Value in the Eyes of his innocent Master and Mistress, and they imagined themselves very happy in a faithful Servant.

All is not Gold, however, that glitters, and our young Apprentice, as soon as conveniently he could, crept to Bed to his dearly beloved *Abigail*, and, in short, in the Process of a few Months, her Belly beginning to rise higher than he could wish it, and for fear of a Discovery in the Family, added to that of the Overseer of the Parish, he came to an absolute Resolution with himself, to make an Elopement at once, whilst all was quiet, and to leave his Mistress in the Lurch, as well as his Place of Bondage, before he could be laid by the Heels for his Misdemeanors.

No sooner resolved on but done ; the Plan was laid but on Saturday Night, and on the Lord's Day Morning, he moved off of the Premises, took with him all the Cloaths he had, as well as *Abigail's* Money, which he got from her, in their last amorous Adventure, and boldly took his Flight for *Newmarket* ; where he appeared in Masquerade, as an adept Jockey ; his Exploits there, and his various shifting of the Scene from Place to Place, will be the subject Matter of the subsequent Pages.

No sooner were the Races over, where he made a considerable Figure, and by that Means presumed to lay several Wagers, without being suspected :



suspected: And as he happened to be very successful, he was caress'd by several of the Nobility; but more particularly by the Publicans, where he was lavish in his Expences, and paid as honourably for what he called for, if not more so, than any foreign Count, or Court Minister, that was resident there to partake of the Diversions of the Place.

Thus flushed with Success, and being, in the Opinion of most, some young country Heir to some old Miser, just happily arrived to an uninterrupted Possession of a very plentiful Estate, several Gamblers, Gamesters, and other humane Vultures, made their Court to him, in Hopes to fleece him; but as he soon opened his Case to them, and made them sensible he was as great an Impostor as themselves, he soon contracted an intimate Acquaintance with them; and they readily consented to make him Chairman of their Society.

As he was a Novice at the first Initiation, they let him into the Secret of shuffling and cutting the Cards, and dropping the Shilling, to draw in the unwary Countryman, or the Guinea, to make a Dupe of the unwary Country-Squire; and being a very apt Scholar, he took it all in, and in less than a Week's Time, he was as expert as the oldest Member of the Shuffling and Cutting Club.

Thus tutor'd, after living in the most profuse Manner, in Regard to drinking, whoring, and the other fashionable Vices of the Age, at *Newmarket*, for about three Weeks or a Month; it was agreed by the whole Assembly (Nem. Con) to break up their Court, and to remove to *London*. As

As *Newmarket* was rather too far, for even the poorest of their Gang to foot it to *London*, they called a Court, and the principal Affair upon the Carpet turn'd upon the important Article of proper Vehicles, for the Conveyance of the respective Members of their Society to *Covent-Garden*; that is to say, to my *L—d M—ts*, the noted Receptacle for Gamblers and other Artificers in the Propagation of the sinking Fund. Whereupon it was unanimously agreed, for Expedition Sake, to steal as many Horses as were requisite for the Purpose. And as three fourths of them were honest *Yorkshire-Men*, a Committee of that Country only, was appointed to furnish the whole Society with the best Saddle Naggs, that could be procured in the Place.

Accordingly a Parcel of Bridles, by Order of the Chairman, was purchased with ready Money; and as there were Nags enow grazing in the Fields adjacent to the Town, the whole Crew got up early one Morning, according to the Signal given, and each provided himself with a Horse for the proposed Expedition.

The Plot was so well laid, that notwithstanding a Hue-and-Cry was soon after them, they fled with too much Speed to be overtaken, and arrived safely at their wish'd-for Port.

They had not been long arrived at *Covent-Garden*, before our *Benjamin* got acquainted with one *S—ms*, a greater Adept in the Faculty of diving than any of the Gang he was now link'd with, in whose Conversation  
he

he was particularly delighted; and with whom he contracted an intimate Friendship.

*S—ms*, being very gracious with several Ladies belonging to the Hundreds of *Drury*, and our *Benjamin*, tho' a true-born *Englishman*, being as promising a young Fellow, and as strong-back'd as most of the *Hibernian Race*, recommended him, as a Bully, fit for their Turn, in any Skirmish Abroad, as well as a Gallant capable of fighting with any one of them (by way of Pleasure and Frolick) between a Pair of Sheets as the stoutest B—n.

Our *Benjamin*, thus once well introduced, became a Favourite in a very short Time, and was soon planted in a snug Place, as Foreman to a Female Academy, where he play'd more Pranks, during his short Residence there in Indolence and Ease, than the most luscious Capuchin ever play'd in a Convent of Nuns.

That Sort of Life, however, not suiting his Inclination long (for he was naturally very sprightly and active) he sent his new favourite Companion *S—ms* a Summons to drink a Bowl of Punch at Mother *Midnight's*, at the Angel in *Drury-Lane*, on the *Sunday* following, as being an idle Day with them both; and accordingly *S—ms* very punctually met on the Day and the Hour proposed.

After a long and serious Debate, they jointly came to a Resolution, not to live like a Couple of worthless Drones, that are only Stallions to a Pack of Female Bees, as they had done for some Time past, but to act for the future like Men of Spirit and Intrepidity; to profess themselves Knights of the Sword, and Super-



intendants Extraordinary of his Majesty's Highways ; and, for their own private Emolument, to patrol a-Nights as well as Days.

Preliminaries now settled, and the Oath of Secrecy (as is customary on the like Contracts) being warmly taken on both Sides, it was first agreed (*Nem. Con.*) to purchase two Pair of Pistols, for the more effectual Prosecution of the Plan laid down, and for their mutual Subsistence in a less servile Way than being the mock Heroes of a Bawdy-House.

In the second Place, it was agreed to make their first Excursion on the *Tuesday* following ; and as *S—ms* was the more experienced Traveller, the Course they had to steer was wholly submitted to his superior Judgment. *S—ms*, therefore, proposed to his Comrade *Hounslow-Heath* for a proper Scene of Action ; and as our *Benjamin* was wholly indifferent in that Particular, made no Objection to the Proposition.

On *Tuesday* Evening, accordingly, they set out about Dusk, and jogg'd on till they came to *Hounslow* Town, very coolly, from whence (after proper refreshment) they jogg'd on for *Stains*, and in their way met with a Physician and his Lady in their Coach, from whom they took a valuable Booty, which they divided to each others satisfaction at the *White Swan* at *Stains*, where they took up their Quarters, and behaved generously, and paid genteely.

Next morning they agreed to return again to *London*, but by another Road ; and in their Way to visit *Hampton Court*.

Accordingly

Accordingly, early in the Morning, they took Horse, and pursued their Journey. Before they had got a mile on the Common leading to *Hampton*, who should overtake them but one of the Collectors of the County of *Surry*, whom they soon discover'd by his Discourse; and as they perceived his Baggs were swell'd with something more than a dirty Shirt, they determin'd to see the Inside of them, and immediately gave him the Word of Command to *Stand and Deliver*.

The Collector, presuming upon the mistaken Notion, *That One honest Man will frighten half a Score Thieves*, instantly prepared to stand in his own Defence; but his Courage proved very ill-timed: *S——ms*, without farther Ceremony shot his Horse, and *Ben* with his Pistol cock'd, was ready to serve the Gentleman himself in the same manner had he made any farther Resistance; but he thought it most prudent to submit to the Loss of his money, rather than to put his Life any more in Jeopardy upon such unequal Terms. Having stripp'd him of all he had, to the Amount of 100 l. they wish'd him a pleasant Walk, and then looking up at the Sun, took their Leave of him with this friendly Admonition: *Sue, Sir, the County. We scorn to ruin a single Man, but there's no Harm, you know, in collecting a Trifle from the Public.*

No sooner was this sarcastical Advice given, but they set Spurs to their Horses, and made the best of their way to *London*, without staying at *Hampton*, having made pretty good use of their time during this short Excursion.

The *Cole-Hole* in *Drury-lane* was their usual Rendezvous, and thither they arrived, and shared the Profits of their Plunder ; and having indulged themselves a few Days in all the Gratifications of Debauchery and Lust, they at Length agreed to part in order to avoid a Discovery : *Ben* travell'd with the Remains of his Booty into *Suffolk* with a Resolution to live honest ; and accordingly hired himself to a Farmer, having first equipp'd himself properly for that purpose. Here he got acquainted with one *Munns*, (lately executed at *Chelmsford* for robbing the *Yarmouth* Mail, and hung in Chains near *Rumford Gallows*) who took great Delight in his Company, and in a very little while they discover'd to each other the methods they formerly follow'd to get Money, and agreed to pursue them : they first began with Shuffling and Cutting the Cards to cheat the young Country Fellows, who little suspected them ; this Practice succeeding, *Ben* soon quitted his Service, and betook himself wholly to his old Trade, in which being seconded by *Munns*, they committed a Series of Villanies hardly to be parallell'd ; all which, together with their artful Escapes, being already publish'd,\* we shall refer our Readers to that Account, and proceed to the Adventures of *Ben*, after parting with *Munns*.

*Ben* travell'd from *Ipswich* to *Braintree*, and in his Way attack'd a Gentleman with the usual Ceremony, and robb'd him of his Watch and some Silver ; the Gentleman desired he

\* See the Life of *Munns* wrote by himself, a Pamphlet worth perusing. Price 4 d.

would



would give him the Seal from his Watch, it belonging to his Family, which he accordingly gave him, and afterwards sold the Watch for two Guineas.

The next Person he attack'd was *Martha Goodey*, near *Sudbury* in *Suffolk*, whom he robbed of her Apron and thirty Shillings in Silver on the King's Highway.

And, lastly, he attack'd the *Bury* Coach in the following manner ; as the Coachman was driving from *Sudbury*, when he came to a Place called *Bannington-Hill* in *Essex*, a few Miles from *Sudbury*, *Barker* came full tilt up the Hill, and called to the Coachman to Stop, which he accordingly did, thinking he had got a Passenger ; however *Ben* soon convinced him of the Mistake, came to the Coach Door, and, in the usual Manner, attack'd Mr. *John Blower*, who was in the Coach alone, robbed him of a Sum of Money, and order'd the Coachman to drive on.

He was taken in *Bannington* a few Days after, and committed to *Chelmsford* Goal by *Robert Tweed*, Esq; of *Halsted*, charged on the Oath of *John Blower*, and by his own Confession ; and also on the Oath of *Martha Goodey*, and by his own Confession, with robbing them on the King's Highway as aforesaid.

He was accordingly tried at the last Assizes at *Chelmsford*, and condemn'd to be hanged with *Munns* and *Hall* ; but was afterwards respited from time to time, till at last the Warrant came down for his Execution, which was order'd on the 18th of *May*.

*The following is the Copy of an Advertisement relating to the Robbery, which has been inserted in the Ipswich Courant.*

**W**HEREAS it has been reported by several Persons, that I BENJAMIN BARKER, now under Sentence of Death in his Majesty's Goal of CHELMSFORD in the County of ESSEX, for robbing Mr JOHN BLOWER of Bocking in the said County, on the King's Highway, have declared, That I took from the said John Blower only some Silver and Half-pence; I the said BENJAMIN BARKER do confess that such Reports are intirely false; and I do also declare, that at the Time I robbed him, being in great Confusion, and standing on a Side-Bank, my Feet slipped from the Place where I stood, and I verily believe the said John Blower lost the whole Sum of Money he said he did, at the Time I robbed him, and that I might drop it in the Hurry and Confusion I was in; I do also declare, that no Person was with me at the Time I robbed the said John Blower; and that what I said when I was before Mr Tweed of Halsted, relating to Smith and Pamenter being concerned with me in the Robbery, is intirely false; and I do beg Mr Tweed's Pardon for the same: I do also declare, that the printed Paper exposed to Sale last Friday, called my DYING SPEECH, is intirely false, and that I never made any such Confession, or gave Orders for printing the same: And I do further declare, that when I sent the Letter to Mr Samuel Betts, to bestow something upon me towards my Support, I thought that he had received the Reward for taking me; but as I find he did not appear against me at the Assizes, I am convinced he had no Right to the same, and that Mr Blower is in no Fault; that Mr Betts had no share of the said Reward: And I do also declare, that Mr Blower was very favourable in giving in his Evidence against me at the Assizes; and that Mr Blower, nor no other Person swore against me at the Assizes, but that I was convicted upon my own Confession

**Confession :** And lastly, I do in Justice to Mr Blower, publish this as the real Truth, and in Vindication of his Character against the many false Aspersions and Reflections he may be charged or chargeable with ; and I humbly beg Pardon, and hope that Mr Blower will forgive me the many Injuries I have done him. In Witness to the Truth of what is above written, I the said Benjamin Barker, as a dying Man, and not long to live, have hereunto set my Hand, this 7th Day of April, in the Year of our Lord 1750.

Sign'd BENJAMIN BARKER.

Attested by	{	John Lough	{	Church-Wardens and
		Thomas Hinde		Overseers of the Poor
		Sam. White & his Mark		of the Parish of Chel-
		Matthew Joye,		msford.
		John Fauntleroy, of Chelmsford.		

*Barker* having been respited so long, was in great Hopes of being reprieved for Transportation ; and when he was inform'd the Dead-Warrant was come down, he was in great Agonies, and said he was sorry he had ever sign'd the above Advertisement.

He behaved very penitent while he was under Sentence of Death, and the Morning of his Execution after his Irons were knock'd off the Minister came and preached a Sermon suitable to the Occasion in the Goal, at which he likewise behaved very penitent, and afterwards received the Sacrament : He then was hand-cuff'd, and walk'd to the Gallows as is usual.

*At the Place of Execution,*

He behaved very penitent, own'd the Fact, and the Justice of his Sentence, advised the Spectators to take Warning by him, and after spending some time in Prayer, called on God to have Mercy on him, was then turned off; and, after hanging the usual time, was cut down and buried near the Gallows.



**E I N I S**



